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Patentanmeldung Nr. Patent application No. Demande de brevet n°

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Der Präsident des Europäischen Patentamts;
Im Auftrag

For the President of the European Patent Office

Le Président de l'Office européen des brevets
p.o.

R C van Dijk



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Bezeichnung der Erfindung/Title of the invention/Titre de l'invention:
(Falls die Bezeichnung der Erfindung nicht angegeben ist, siehe Beschreibung.
If no title is shown please refer to the description.
Si aucun titre n'est indiqué se referer à la description.)

Control strategy for computer-controlled steering

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CONTROL STRATEGY FOR COMPUTER-CONTROLLED STEERING

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Field of Invention

10 The present invention generally relates to a power assisted steering system arranged to supply a steering assist force to the steering system of an automobile or vehicle. In particularly the invention relates to a steering system, which allows a control of the steering characteristics experienced by the driver.

Background of the Invention

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Different steering equipments for assisting a driver to steer an automobile or a vehicle are well known in the art. Traditionally the driver controls the direction of the vehicle with the aid of a steering wheel mechanically connected to the road wheels through a steering assembly. However, to assist the driver it is common to use an auxiliary system to generate an additional force, which is applied to the steering assembly of the vehicle. The additional force reduces the effort required by the driver in changing the direction of the road wheels. Said additional force can be generated by different techniques, e.g. by a hydraulic drive or an electric motor.

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Traditionally, various Hydraulic Power Assisted Steering (HPAS) systems have been used to add a certain amount of assist torque or assist force to the steering assembly of the vehicle. Such hydraulic systems are typically based on an assist characteristic, often called boost-curve. The shape of a boost-curve is generally determined by the design of the valve and the pump in the hydraulic system. It follows that the assist characteristic in a

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traditional HPAS-system is static, i.e. the relation between the steering effort required from the driver and the assist torque supplied by the HPAS-system is dependent on a predetermined and static boost-curve. The operation of a boost-curve based HPAS-system is generally such that a certain torque applied by the driver to the steering wheel results in a certain assist torque applied by the HPAS-system to the steering assembly of the vehicle, where the assist torque increases as the driver needs to apply more torque to the steering wheel and decreases as the driver needs to apply less torque to the steering wheel. The amount of torque, which the driver needs to apply to the steering wheel, is in turn dependent upon the specific driving scenario, e.g. dependent upon the vehicle speed, the vehicle turning angle etc.

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The static or nearly static assist characteristic of an HPAS-system makes it difficult or impossible to find an appropriate balance between the transmission of road disturbances to the driver and the delivery of suitable steering feel to the driver.

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If an HPAS-system uses high static assist torque, less steering effort is needed from the driver, which can be advantageous e.g. to reduce the steering effort needed for parking manoeuvres. A high assist torque will also reduce the transmission of road disturbances to the steering wheel when the vehicle moves, which is another advantage. However, while a high assist torque reduces the influence from road disturbances, a high assist torque will also make the vehicle sensitive for steering wheel inputs, especially at highway speed, which is a disadvantage since it reduces the steering feel.

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If an HPAS-system uses a low static assist torque, more steering effort is needed from the driver. However, this stabilises vehicle response to manoeuvres at highway speed and consequently increases the steering feel, which is an advantage. On the other hand, low assist torque will also increase the transmission of road disturbances to the driver, which is an unwanted effect in the steering wheel and consequently a disadvantage.

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HPAS-systems of the kind now discussed had its major breakthrough in the early sixties and the overall system configuration has remained the same. Minor modifications have been made in order to meet the demands of today's customers. Still, the main task of an HPAS-system is to reduce the steering effort required by the driver by adding a certain amount of assist force to the steering assembly of the vehicle. Such ordinary HPAS-systems use a low assist force (low amplification) to accomplish a suitable steering feel, which means that ordinary HPAS-systems is unable to adequately attenuate road disturbances. This is one important disadvantage with ordinary HPAS-systems.

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However, in recent years the older HPAS-systems has been replaced by various new Electric Power Assisted Steering (EPAS) systems to be used in connection with vehicle steering.

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The patent US 6,250,410 B1 (Chabaan) shows a steering system of an automobile, wherein a H-infinity controller is used to control an electric motor in an EPAS-system. The H-infinity controller makes a contribution to the control of the electric motor depending on estimated pinion torque, steering column angle, electric motor velocity, desired assist torque, estimated driver torque, and a measure of the steering wheel torque applied by the driver. The final control signal U, which is received by the electric motor, is then calculated by adding a contribution from a non-linear boost-curve to the result from the H-

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infinity controller. The boost-curve maps the amount of input command to the electric motor versus the estimated driver torque (i.e. an estimation of the torque actually applied by the driver), i.e. depending on the estimated driver torque the boost-curve points out an amount of input command to be supplied to the electric motor. The overall concept is in line with a traditional boost-curve strategy. Hence, Chabaan does not explicitly decouple the control of the steering wheel torque from attenuation of road disturbances, since the output from the boost-curve is influenced by road disturbances inherent in the estimated driver torque.

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- 10 The patent US 6,219,604 B1 (Dilger) shows a steering system of an automobile, wherein a controller structure for an entire steering system is described. The controller structure uses a steer-by-wire concept, which means that there is no mechanical connection between the steering wheel and the steering gear assembly. If such a mechanical connection were present in the steering gear assembly it would be responsible for transmission of road
- 15 disturbances to the driver. When this connection is substituted or simulated by e.g. electrical means, road disturbances can be eliminated.

- To convey a steering feel to the driver Dilger provides a first electric motor that, controlled by an electronic steering device, imposes a controllable resistance torque to the steering
- 20 wheel. The steering wheel resistance torque can be determined and processed e.g. by measuring the current applied to a second electric motor that imposes a steering torque to the steering gear assembly, or by directly measuring the torque that is imposed by said second electrical motor to the steering gear assembly. The steering wheel resistance torque may alternatively be calculated by creating a model, using various vehicle data
- 25 (e.g. vehicle speed, friction between road surface and tires, steering wheel angle, etc). Dilger describes both variants in col. 6 at line 5 and forward.

- If the resistance torque is determined by measuring the current applied to the second electric motor, which imposes a torque to the steering gear assembly, or if it is determined
- 30 by directly measuring said torque, it is possible to filter and thereby reduce transfer of road surface irregularities, vibrations etc to the steering wheel, see e.g. col. 6 line 51-56. However, Dilger merely mentions the possibility of said filtering and does not reveal any further information regarding the operation and constitution of such a filter.

- 35 If the resistance torque is determined by creating a model, using various vehicle data, it might be possible to reduce transfer of road surface irregularities, vibrations etc to the steering wheel. Here again, Dilger merely mentions the possibility of said filtering and does not reveal any further information regarding the operation and constitution of such a

model. Dilger also shows a reference generator that serves to provide a desired yaw component. However, this is e.g. different from supplying a desired steering wheel torque.

- 5 The patent application WO 01/47762 A1 shows a steering system of an automobile, wherein a scheme for stabilizing an electric power steering system under adverse road conditions is described. Adverse road conditions could e.g. occur when the road is wet or icy. The patent does not specifically address the question of generating a desired assist torque or a desired steering feel, see e.g. page 4, line 26-29.
- 10 The patent US 6,013,954 shows a steering system of an automobile, wherein a control strategy is implemented in the motor controller adapted to control the behaviour of the electric motor in an EPS-system. This control strategy may be implemented in most motor controllers, e.g. in the motor controller mentioned in this patent application. However, in this connection it should be noted that the motor controller only constitutes a
- 15 part of the invention according to this patent application.

- To summarise, the prior art references cited above do not specifically address the problem of controlling the steering characteristics experienced by the driver and at the same time controlling the amount of road disturbances transmitted to the driver. Especially, the
- 20 references do not address the problem of accomplishing a control of the steering characteristics independent from the control of said transmission of road disturbances. In particular they do not address said problems in connection with a vehicle steering assembly comprising a steering shaft arrangement, which mechanically connects the steering wheel to the road wheels.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention relates to a power assisted steering system constituted so as to impose a steering assist force or torque to the steering assembly of an automobile or vehicle. In particular the invention relates to a system for controlling the steering characteristics experienced by the driver and the amount of road disturbances transmitted to the driver, wherein said steering characteristics is determined and controlled independently from the control of said transmission of road disturbances. Therefore, a two degree-of-freedom steering system is disclosed by the invention.

The steering system according to the invention includes a control system comprising a generator for calculating a desired steering wheel torque that should be felt by the driver of the vehicle. The control system further includes a first controller and possibly a second controller, where the first controller controls a motor controller, possibly in cooperation with said second controller. In turn the motor controller controls a motor that imposes a steering assist force or torque to the steering assembly of the vehicle.

The generator in the control system calculates a desired steering wheel resist torque that should be felt by the driver of the vehicle, dependent upon the current driving scenario. The current driving scenario can be determined by observing, measuring, calculating etc such vehicle statuses as e.g. yaw rate, vehicle lateral acceleration, steering wheel angle, steering wheel angular speed and vehicle speed etc, but also by observing, measuring, calculating etc various driver signals such as signals from the throttle pedal or the break pedal etc. It should be noted that said calculated desired steering wheel resist torque is independent from any measure of various torque forces imposed on the steering assembly. Any such measure may contain road disturbances, which should not be transmitted to the driver.

The first controller in the control system is generally based on an inverse model of the steering system dynamic. The design of a suitable first controller falls into the area of traditional control engineering and various designs are well known to a person skilled in the art. According to the invention, the first controller calculates an assist torque to be imposed by the motor to the steering gear assembly, so that steering wheel resist torque actually felt by the driver corresponds to or equals the desired steering wheel resist torque previously calculated by the generator.

A second controller may be introduced in the control system to minimise possible remaining steering system errors to zero. In a preferred embodiment the second controller

may also attenuate undesired road disturbances with a low risk of instability in the operation of the steering system. When introduced the second controller calculates an adjustment value, which value adjusts the assist torque calculated by the first controller.

- 5 The control system operates in such a way that a signal from the motor controller controls the motor, and consequently the steering assist torque imposed by the motor to the steering assembly. In turn the signal from the first and possibly the second controller controls the motor controller, whereas a signal from the generator controls the first controller. The possible second controller is controlled by a combination of the signal from
- 10 the generator and a signal corresponding to the steering wheel resist torque actually felt by the driver. In embodiments without a second controller the first controller is supplied with the signal from the generator, combined with the signal corresponding to the steering wheel resist torque actually felt by the driver. Further, said steering wheel resist torque actually felt by the driver is in turn dependent upon the amount of assist torque imposed
- 15 by the motor to the steering assembly, reduced by the friction in the steering assembly and by the effects from different road loads, such as the road wheel friction against the road surface.
- 20 By its operation the control system controls the motor to impose an assist torque to the steering assembly so as to deliver a desired steering feel to the vehicle driver, i.e. so that the driver feels a desired steering wheel resist torque, wherein the desired steering wheel resist torque corresponds to or equals the desired resist torque calculated by the generator.
- 25 The configuration and operation of the invention facilitates a separation of the attenuation of road disturbances transmitted to the driver from the delivery of a desired steering wheel resist torque to the driver. In particular the invention facilitates an explicit decoupling of the steering control from the generation of a desired steering wheel resist torque.
- 30 An additional advantage of this invention falls into the area of modularity. Especially the reference generator provides the subsequent controller with a desired steering wheel resist torque signal, which is independent from the rest of the contemplated control system and the contemplated steering system. The reference generator can therefore be reused for different applications, thus facilitating an application-independent steering feel.

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Further advantages will appear from the following detailed description of the invention.

Brief description of the drawings

5 A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described in more detail, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Fig. 1 shows a diagrammatic view of an electric powered assist steering system for a wheeled vehicle according to the present invention.

10 Fig. 2 shows a block diagram of a control system according to a first preferred embodiment of the present invention, employing a generator, a first controller and a second controller for controlling the electric power assisted steering system.

15 Fig. 3 shows a block diagram of a control system according to a second preferred embodiment of the present invention, employing a generator and a first controller for controlling the electric power assisted steering system.

Fig. 4 shows a block diagram of a generator for calculating a reference steering wheel assist torque according to the present invention.

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Fig. 5 shows a Bode plot of the specific filter function in the second controller.

Detailed description of preferred embodiments of the invention

The EPAS-system

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Referring to Fig. 1, an Electric Power Assisted Steering system 100 (hereinafter denoted EPAS-system) is illustrated. The EPAS-system 100 is preferably a system for use in steering the road wheels of an automobile or a vehicle, wherein the EPAS-system 100 is equipped with a control system 110 according to the present invention. Although the
10 EPAS-system 100 is described in connection with a power assisted steering of the road wheels of an automobile, it should be appreciated that the EPAS-system 100 and the control system 110 according to the present invention may be employed to steer any number of front and/or rear wheels of a steered vehicle.

15 The EPAS-system Steering Assembly

The EPAS-system 100 shown in Fig. 1 comprises a steering assembly, i.e. comprising a steering wheel 120. The steering wheel 120 is generally disposed in the vehicle passenger compartment and manually operated by the driver of the vehicle to steer the road wheels
20 127. Further, the steering assembly includes a steering shaft 121, operatively coupled to the steering wheel 120. Said steering shaft 121 rotates in synchronization with the steering wheel 120, preferably directly connected to steering wheel 120. The steering assembly also employs a pinion shaft 122, operatively engaged with steering shaft 121. The steering shaft 121 and the pinion shaft 122 are preferably interconnected via a
25 universal joint (130), as is well known in the vehicle steering art. Said pinion shaft 122 is coupled at one end to a pinion gear assembly 123 for converting angular rotation of the pinion shaft 122 to linear movement on a rack 124. The rack 124 is coupled on opposite ends to tie rods 125 and connector rods 126, which are movable to control left and right rotation of road wheels 127. It should be appreciated that the steering wheel 120, steering
30 shaft 121, pinion shaft 122, and pinion gear assembly 123, rack 124, tie rods 125, connector rods 126 and road wheels 127 as shown only illustrates one of several suitable steering assemblies known to the person skilled in the art.

Other EPAS-system Components

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The EPAS-system 100 as shown in Fig. 1 also includes a motor 115 coupled to the steering assembly, preferably to the pinion shaft 122. The motor 115 is preferably an electric motor, which provides an assist torque or force to the steering assembly, such as to assist the driver of the vehicle in rotating the steering wheel 120, i.e. so as to reduce the amount

of steering effort required from the driver. The assist torque e.g. reduces the effect from friction components, such as friction in the steering assembly, and the effects from different road loads, such as road wheel friction against the road surface.

- 5 In addition the EPAS-system includes a torque estimator arrangement 128 for measuring and/or calculating the torque T_{driver} , which corresponds to or equals the resist torque actually felt by the driver, i.e. the resist torque actually felt by the driver when turning the steering wheel 120. The torque estimator 128 may in one embodiment comprise a torsion bar (not shown) e.g. arranged between the steering wheel 120 and the steering shaft 121, and an angle sensor (not shown) for measuring the deflection of said torsion bar. The deflection of said torsion bar increases when the driver feels more resist torque while turning the steering wheel 120, whereas the deflection decreases when the driver feels less resist torque while turning the steering wheel 120. Hence the deflection of the torsion bar will represent a measure of the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver, which is dependent upon the resist torque received from the steering shaft 121. The resist torque received from the steering shaft 121 is in turn dependent upon various friction components, such as friction in the steering assembly, and the effects from different road loads, such as the road wheel friction against the road surface, reduced by the amount of steering assist torque imposed by the electric motor 115 to the steering assembly of the vehicle.

- The EPAS-system 100 also comprises various types of vehicle sensors, such as accelerometers and velocity sensors, which are sensors well known to the person skilled in the art. An accelerometer sensor may e.g. be a lateral accelerometer sensor (not shown), for measuring the vehicle lateral acceleration. Further, the EPAS-system includes a yaw velocity sensor (not shown) for measuring the vehicle yaw rate ω .

- In a preferred embodiment accelerometer sensors are arranged at the vehicle centre of gravity. The position of the centre of gravity is a well-known design variable, which is generally determined by the vehicle manufacturer. However, in many applications various design constraints may dictate that such sensors cannot be placed at the exact centre of gravity. For instance, the centre of gravity may reside in a physical location that prohibits the placement of sensors at that location. Further, the placement of other components and systems may dictate that the location is not available for placing accelerometer sensors. In such cases the sensor output signals are compensated utilizing well-known principles for their geometric offsets from the centre of gravity.

In addition the EPAS-system 100 includes a steering wheel rotation-angle sensor 129 for measuring the steering wheel rotation-angle θ . Preferably the steering wheel rotation-

angle sensor 129 senses the angular position of the steering shaft 121, which provides a measure of the angular position of the steering wheel 120. The EPAS-system 100 may also monitor angular velocity $\dot{\theta}$ of the steering wheel 120, which may be measured by a separate sensor (not shown) or calculated by differentiating the steering wheel position angle θ .

As an overall prerequisite the EPAS-system 100 may also utilise such vehicle information as vehicle speed etc, which information is commonly available in the electronic systems of most vehicles. All such information, in addition to information from the above mentioned sensors, may be supplied to the control system 110 for further processing.

Configuration of the Control System

Referring to Fig. 1 the EPAS-system 100 includes a control system 110 that controls the amount of assist torque that is imposed by the electric motor 115 to the steering assembly. The control system 110 preferably includes one or several microprocessor-based components, which have memory programmed to operate control routines, process input signals and generate output signals. Said components preferably include suitable interfaces and converters for receiving input signals and transmitting output signals.

Referring to fig. 2 the control system 110 is preferably configured with a generator 200, a first controller 210 and possibly a second controller 220, and a motor controller 230. However, the motor controller 230 may not form a part of the control system 110, but rather a part of the EPAS-system 100.

The motor controller 230 and the electric motor 115 are standard components and the person skilled in the art is aware of several suitable alternative motor controllers and motors, therefore no detailed description of the configuration of the motor controller or the motor is needed.

Various filters and other functions may be introduced before or after said generator 200, said first controller 210, said second controller 220 and said motor controller 230 without departing from the invention. A disturbance filter may e.g. be introduced between the first controller 210 and the motor controller 230 without departing from the invention. While the generator 200, the first controller 210 and the second controller 220 are preferably implemented in software it should be appreciated that the control system 110 alternatively may include various analogue and/or digital circuits without departing from the present invention.

The Generator

Referring to fig. 2 the generator 200 in the control system 110 is preferably a reference generator, which calculates a reference or desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} that should be felt by the driver of the vehicle, dependent upon the current driving scenario. The calculated desired resist torque T_{ref} is used by the control system 110 as a reference value towards which the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is adapted to correspond or equal, which is accomplished by varying the assist torque imposed by the electric motor 115 to the steering assembly. The calculated desired resist torque T_{ref} is preferably not based on or otherwise dependent on any measure, estimation, calculation which contains or reflects road disturbances.

Configuration and Operation of the Generator

Referring to fig. 4 the reference generator 200 preferably comprises a vehicle state estimator 310 and an inverse boost-curve arrangement 320. The state estimator 310 is preferably based on a model of the steering properties of the present vehicle. Said state estimator 310 preferably receives a yaw rate signal ω and a steering wheel rotation-angle signal θ , corresponding to the vehicle yaw rate and the vehicle steering wheel rotation-angle respectively. The state estimator 310 outputs an intermediate F_{rack} signal, corresponding to an estimation of the total torque or force needed to be imposed on the steering assembly for steering the road wheels 127.

The equation representing the operation of the preferred vehicle state estimator 310 can be written as:

$$F_{rack} = C_2 \hat{x}(t) \quad (10)$$

Wherein the differential of \hat{x} is defined by the equation

$$\dot{\hat{x}}(t) = A\hat{x}(t) + Bu(t) + K[y(t) - C_1\hat{x}(t)] \quad (20)$$

Wherein $u(t)$ is the steering wheel rotation-angle θ , $y(t)$ is the yaw rate ω and K is the error feedback gain.

The vector $\hat{x}(t)$ represents an estimation of vehicle state variables, i.e. sideslip angle, yaw rate and the lateral forces on front and rear axle. The equation $\dot{\hat{x}}(t)$ is recursively integrated to obtain $\hat{x}(t)$. In that respect $\hat{x}(t)$ is assigned a start or default value when the state estimator 310 starts operating. A first value of $\hat{x}(t)$ is then calculated according to equation 20 above, depending upon a first simultaneously sampled value of the variables $u(t)$ and $y(t)$ respectively. This value of $\dot{\hat{x}}(t)$ is then integrated to obtain a first value of $\hat{x}(t)$, e.g. by multiplying $\dot{\hat{x}}(t)$ with the time difference Δt representing the time elapsed between two samples of the variables $u(t)$ and $y(t)$. The first value of $\hat{x}(t)$ is then reused in equation 20 to calculate a second value of $\dot{\hat{x}}(t)$, depending on a second simultaneously sampled value of the variables $u(t)$ and $y(t)$ respectively, which second value of $\dot{\hat{x}}(t)$ is integrated to obtain second value of $\hat{x}(t)$. This recursive integrating procedure is repeated as long as the state estimator 310 operates.

The terms A , B , C_1 and C_2 in equation 20 are defined as follows:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -1 & \frac{1}{mvx} & \frac{1}{mvx} \\ 0 & 0 & \frac{1f}{J} & -\frac{1r}{J} \\ clyvx & -\frac{cflf}{\tau Fvx} & -\frac{1}{\tau F} & 0 \\ clyxv & \frac{crlr}{\tau Rvx} & 0 & -\frac{1}{\tau uF} \end{bmatrix} \quad (30)$$

$$B = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ clyvx \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad (40)$$

$$C_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad (50)$$

$$C_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad (60)$$

Wherein m denotes the vehicle mass, J the vehicle inertia, v_x the longitudinal vehicle velocity, l_f and l_r the position of the vehicles center of gravity from front and rear axle respectively, c_{ly} the non-stationary contact patch cornering stiffness, c_f and c_r the cornering stiffness of front and rear axle respectively and τ_F and τ_R the time constant of these cornering stiffness.

The intermediate signal F_{rack} , calculated as described above, is received by the inverse boost-curve 320 arrangement. The intermediate signal F_{rack} then decides the output signal from the inverse boost-curve 320, where said output signal is the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} signal, which is used by the control system 110 as a reference value, whereby the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is adapted to correspond or equal the desired resist torque T_{ref} .

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In a preferred configuration and operation the inverse boost-curve 310 comprises one stored look-up table for every relevant vehicle speed v , e.g. one table may be stored for the velocity of 0 km/h, another table for 5 km/h, still another table for 10 km/h and so on, until the vehicle maximum speed is safely covered. Alternatively, there may be one look-up table stored for every increase of the velocity by 1 km/h, i.e. if the maximum speed of the vehicle is 200 km/h there are at least 200 tables stored. There may be other numbers or configurations of look-up tables without departing from the invention, e.g. there could be a high number of tables with in certain speed ranges and a lower number of tables in other speed ranges. As already mentioned the inverse boost-curve 310 operates in such a way that it receives the intermediate signal F_{rack} calculated by the vehicle state observer 310 and, depending upon the value of the received intermediate signal F_{rack} , outputs a desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} signal.

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The reference generator 200 described above is merely an exemplary generator. There are a number of feasible ways to build a reference generator in which the underlying idea is to compute a desired resist torque that fulfils the drivers expectation for each driving scenario. One alternative approach is to use an analytical-based method e.g. using a model representing an ideal vehicle. Another alternative approach is to use a measurement-based procedure e.g. obtaining the relevant transfer functions of the specific

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vehicle by real driving and canalise the behaviour of this vehicle into the reference generator by an appropriate post processing.

The First Controller

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Referring to fig. 2 the first controller 210 in the control system 110 is preferably a feed-forward controller that receives information about the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} calculated by the reference generator 200. A preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ is calculated by the feed-forward controller 210, dependent upon the received desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} .

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The feed-forward controller 210 is preferably a filter function generally based on an inverse model of the steering system dynamics of the present vehicle. The design of such a feed-forward controller falls into the area of traditional control engineering and various designs are well known by the person skilled in the art.

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A preferred example of a feed-forward filter function $H(s)$ is:

$$H(s) = \frac{J_{sc} \cdot s^2 + b_{sc} \cdot s + k_{sc}}{(s/\omega_f + 1)^3} \quad (70)$$

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Wherein J_{sc} is the lumped steering column inertia, b_{sc} the steering column friction, k_{sc} the lumped steering column spring stiffness and ω_f the filter frequency, whereas s represents the Laplace operator.

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When a feed-forward filter function $H(s)$ as exemplified above is used a preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ can be calculated by the following formula:

$$T_{assprel} = H(s) \cdot T_{ref} \quad (80)$$

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The preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ corresponds to the assist torque to be imposed by the electric motor 115 to the steering assembly, so as to reduce the steering wheel torque in an amount substantially appropriate to let the driver feel the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} previously calculated by the reference generator 200.

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The feed-forward filter function $H(s)$ and the formula for calculating the preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ correspond to the operation of a preferred first controller 210 according to the present invention. However, other controllers can be used, which controllers are known by the person skilled in the art to produce the same result.

The Second Controller

5 The preliminary assist torque T_{ssprel} , calculated as described above, is preferably adjusted before it is supplied to the motor controller 230, which motor controller controls the electric motor 115. Such an adjustment is usually needed to reduce errors in the model used by the feed-forward controller and to reduce disturbances and measurement noise, e.g. received from detectors and sensors used by the control system 110.

10 Therefore, a second controller is preferably introduced in the control system 110 in order to compensate and minimise possible errors in the feed-forward controller 210 and to reduce disturbances and measurement noise, which reduces the risk of instability in the operation of the EPAS-system 100. In a preferred embodiment the second controller also attenuates undesired road disturbances, with a guarantee of stability in the operation of
15 the EPAS-system 100.

Referring to fig. 2 the second controller 220 in the control system 110 is preferably a feedback controller, which receives a signal $T_{feedback}$. The signal $T_{feedback}$ is a combination of the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} signal and the T_{driver} signal, where the T_{driver}
20 signal corresponds to the resist torque actually felt by the driver; defined by the formula:

$$T_{feedback} = T_{ref} - T_{driver} \quad (90)$$

25 The feedback controller 220 calculates an adjustment value T_{adj} , which depends upon the received $T_{feedback}$ signal according to the following formula:

$$T_{adj} = A(s) \cdot T_{feedback} \quad (100)$$

30 The feedback function $A(s)$ is preferably a filter function e.g. defined by the general formula:

$$A(s) = \frac{a_{n-1}s^{n-1} + \dots + a_2s + a_1}{b_ns^n + \dots + b_2s + b_1} \quad (110)$$

35 Wherein $a_{n-1} \dots a_1$ and $b_{n-1} \dots b_1$ are the polynomial coefficients of the numerator and denominator polynom, whereas s represents the Laplace operator.

A preferred filter function $A(s)$ wherein $n=5$:

$$A(s) = \frac{0.0002889 \cdot s^4 - 0.0008672 \cdot s^3 + 0.292 \cdot s^2 + 0.5469s + 0.005714}{1.027 \cdot 10^{-6} \cdot s^5 + 0.000129 \cdot s^4 + 0.006079 \cdot s^3 + 0.1273 \cdot s^2 + s} \quad (120)$$

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However other general filter functions and special implementation of those can be used without departing from the invention.

10 The Bode plot of the preferred filter function in equation 120 is shown in figure 5. Each frequency interval in the domain has its specific purpose as indicated in the figure. Interval 1 has the task of decreasing the steady state error, interval 2 and 3 are responsible for dynamic performance in terms of error and damping, interval 4 cancels unwanted frequencies and interval 5 avoids the influence from measurement noise.

15 It has briefly been stated above and it is clearly stated here that the formula for calculating the signal $T_{feedback}$, the feedback filter function $A(s)$, and the formula used to calculate the adjustment value T_{adj} represents the operation of a preferred second controller 220 according to the present invention. The invention is therefore not limited to the second controller now described. Other controllers known to the person skilled in the art can be
20 used to minimise errors and disturbances, with a reduced risk of instability in the operation of the EPAS-system 100. Such alternative controllers may also be used to attenuate undesired road disturbances, with a guarantee of stability in the operation of the EPAS-system 100.

25 Now, when the preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ and the adjustment value T_{adj} have been calculated as described above, an assist torque T_{ass} signal can be calculated and supplied to the motor controller 230. The calculation is preferably accomplished according to the formula:

$$30 \quad T_{ass} = T_{prel} + T_{adj} \quad (130)$$

It should be noted that the adjustment value T_{adj} could both increase and decrease the preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ as well as leave it unaffected, i.e. the adjustment signal T_{adj} could be negative, positive or zero.

35

However, the second controller 220 may be omitted if possible deficiencies in the first controller 210 can be accepted without corrections in the particular application, and if

possible uncertainties, disturbances or errors in or from the particular steering system can be accepted without corrections in the particular application.

- 5 As shown in Fig. 3, if it is acceptable in the particular application to omit the second controller 220, the signal $T_{feedback}$ can be supplied to the first controller 210, which dependent upon the signal $T_{feedback}$ calculates an assist torque T_{assdir} that is directly supplied to the motor controller 230. The motor controller 230 then commands the motor 115 to impose an assist torque to the steering assembly, said assist torque corresponding to said calculated assist torque T_{assdir} , whereby the steering wheel torque needed is reduced or
10 possibly increased in an amount substantially appropriate to let the driver feel the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} , previously calculated by the reference generator 200.

Communication within the Control System

- 15 According to a first preferred embodiment shown in fig. 2 the control system 110 communicates in such a way that the electric motor 115 receives a signal I_{motor} from the motor controller 230, which causes the motor 115 to impose an assist torque to the steering assembly of the vehicle, wherein the assist torque corresponds to said received signal I_{motor} .

- 20 Said signal I_{motor} received by the motor 115 corresponds in turn to an assist torque T_{ass} signal, which is received by the motor controller 230. The motor controller 230 converts the received assist torque T_{ass} signal into an output signal I_{motor} , adapted to the particular motor 115. The output signal I_{motor} from the motor controller 230 is preferably a current,
25 however it may be a voltage or some other appropriate signal adapted to command the particular motor, e.g. a digital command word.

- Said received assist torque T_{ass} signal corresponds in turn to a sum of a preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ signal and an adjustment T_{adj} signal, which are added in a summation
30 arrangement 260. As a result said summation arrangement 260 outputs said assist torque T_{ass} signal. The summation arrangement 260 is preferably implemented by software and/or by integrated circuits. However other summation arrangements may be used without departing from the invention.

- 35 Said preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ signal depends in turn upon a desired resist torque T_{ref} signal received by the feed-forward controller 210. The feed-forward controller 210 calculates and outputs said preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ signal, which calculation is described above.

Said adjustment T_{adj} signal depends in turn upon the desired resist torque T_{ref} and a resist torque signal T_{driver} . The T_{driver} signal is subtracted from the T_{ref} signal in a comparison or subtraction arrangement 270, whereby the result from said subtraction is received by the feedback controller 220. The feedback controller 220 calculates and outputs said adjustment T_{adj} signal, which calculation is described above. Said comparison or subtraction arrangement 270 is preferably implemented by software and/or by integrated circuits. However other arrangements may be used without departing from the invention.

Said desired resist torque T_{ref} signal corresponds in turn to the desired steering wheel resist torque that should be felt by the driver, which desired resist torque T_{ref} is calculated by the reference generator 200 as described above.

Said T_{driver} signal corresponds in turn to the resist torque actually felt by the driver, i.e. the torque actually felt by the driver when turning the steering wheel 120. The T_{driver} signal can e.g. be measured by a torque estimator arrangement 128 as described above.

According to a second preferred embodiment shown in fig. 3 the control system 110 communicates in such a way that the electric motor 115 receives a signal I_{motor} from the motor controller 230, which causes the motor 115 to impose an assist torque to the steering assembly of the vehicle, wherein the assist torque corresponds to the received signal I_{motor} .

Said signal I_{motor} received by the motor 115 corresponds in turn to an assist torque T_{ass} signal, which is received by the motor controller 230. The motor controller 230 converts the received assist torque T_{assdir} signal into an output signal I_{motor} , adapted to the particular motor 115. The output signal I_{motor} from the motor controller 230 is preferably a current, however it may be a voltage or some other appropriate signal adapted to command the particular motor, e.g. a digital command word.

Said received assist torque T_{assdir} signal depends in turn upon the desired resist torque T_{ref} and a resist torque signal T_{driver} . The T_{driver} signal is subtracted from the T_{ref} signal in a comparison or subtraction arrangement 270, whereby the result from said subtraction is received by the feed forward controller 210. The feed forward controller 210 calculates and outputs said assist torque T_{assdir} signal as described above. Said comparison or subtraction arrangement 270 is preferably implemented by software and/or by integrated circuits. However other arrangements may be used without departing from the invention.

Said desired resist torque T_{ref} signal corresponds in turn to the desired steering wheel resist torque that should be felt by the driver, which desired resist torque T_{ref} is calculated by the reference generator 200 as described above.

- 5 Said T_{driver} signal corresponds in turn to the resist torque actually felt by the driver, i.e. the torque actually felt by the driver when turning the steering wheel 120. The T_{driver} signal can e.g. be measured by a torque estimator arrangement 128 as described above.

Operation of the Control System

10

In a first preferred embodiment referring to Fig. 2 the operation of the control system 110 is such that the reference generator 200 calculates a desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} that should be felt by the driver of the vehicle, dependent upon the current driving scenario.

15

The desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} is supplied to the feed-forward controller 210, which calculates a preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ corresponding to an assist torque to be imposed by the electric motor 115 to the steering assembly, so as to reduce or possibly increase the steering wheel resist torque in an amount substantially appropriate to let the driver feel the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} .

20

However, the preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ is preferably adjusted by an adjustment torque T_{adj} calculated by the feedback controller 220, where said adjustment torque T_{adj} depends upon the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} and the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver. Said adjustment torque T_{adj} will increase if the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is less than the desired resist torque T_{ref} , while said adjustment torque T_{adj} will decrease if the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is higher than the desired resist torque T_{ref} . In other words, more assist torque is needed if the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is less than the desired resist torque T_{ref} , while less assist torque is needed if the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is higher than the desired resist torque T_{ref} .

25

30

A sum of the preliminary assist torque $T_{assprel}$ and the adjustment torque T_{adj} is then supplied to the motor controller 230, which commands the electric motor 115 to impose an assist torque to the steering assembly of the vehicle, which assist torque corresponds to said sum of $T_{assprel}$ and T_{adj} .

35

In a second preferred embodiment referring to Fig. 3 the operation of the control system 110 is such that the reference generator 200 calculates a desired steering wheel resist

- torque T_{ref} that should be felt by the driver of the vehicle, dependent upon the current driving scenario, whereas the steering wheel resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is measured or calculated by the torque estimator 128. The value of T_{driver} is then subtracted from the value of T_{ref} , whereby more assist torque is needed if the resist torque
- 5 T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is less than the desired resist torque T_{ref} , while less assist torque is needed if the resist torque T_{driver} actually felt by the driver is higher than the desired resist torque T_{ref} .
- 10 The feed forward controller 210 receives the result from said subtraction and calculates an assist torque T_{assist} , which corresponds to the assist torque needed to be imposed by the electric motor 115 to the steering assembly, so as to reduce the steering wheel resist torque in an amount substantially appropriate to let the driver feel the desired steering wheel resist torque T_{ref} .
- 15 The assist torque T_{assist} is then supplied to the motor controller 230, which commands the electric motor 115 to impose an assist torque corresponding to said assist torque T_{assist} to the steering assembly of the vehicle.
- 20 The present invention should not be considered as being limited to the above described preferred embodiments, but rather includes all possible variations covered by the scope defined by the appended claims.

PATENT CLAIMS

1. A control system (110) for controlling an assist force imposed to a steering assembly of a vehicle, so as to deliver a steering wheel resist torque that can be felt by the vehicle driver, characterised in;
that the delivered steering wheel resist torque is compared with a desired steering wheel resist torque, whereupon the delivered steering wheel resist torque is adapted to be substantially the same as the desired steering wheel resist torque through adapting the amount of said assist force.
2. A control system (110) according to claim 1 comprising:
a generator (200) which provides a value of a desired steering wheel resist torque.
3. A control system (110) according to claim 1 or 2 wherein:
the desired steering wheel resist torque is dependent upon the current vehicle driving-scenario.
4. A control system (110) according to claim 2 or 3 wherein:
the desired steering wheel resist torque is calculated depending upon at least three of the variables; vehicle speed, vehicle yaw rate, steering wheel rotation-angle or vehicle lateral acceleration.
5. A control system (110) according to claim 2, 3 or 4 comprising:
a first controller (210) receiving a value from said comparison and providing a value of an assist force substantially corresponding to the assist force needed for the delivered steering wheel resist torque to be substantially the same as the desired steering wheel resist torque.
6. A control system (110) according to claim 2, 3 or 4 comprising:
a first controller (210) receiving a value of the desired steering wheel resist torque and providing a value of an assist force substantially corresponding to the assist force needed for the delivered steering wheel resist torque to be substantially the same as the desired steering wheel resist torque.
7. A control system (110) according to claim 5 or 6 wherein:
said first controller comprises a filter function based on an inverse model of the steering properties of the present vehicle.

8. A control system (110) according to claim 6 or 7 comprising:
a second controller (220) receiving a value from said comparison and providing a value for
adjusting said preliminary assist force provided by said first controller.
- 5 9. A control system (110) according to claim 8 wherein:
said adjustment is performed to minimise errors from the first controller (210) and to
minimise disturbances and measurement noise received from the steering system (100)
and to reduce the influence of road disturbances in the steering wheel (120).
- 10 10. A control system (110) according to claim 5 or 7 wherein:
the value provided by said first controller (210) is submitted to a motor controller (230) for
controlling the assist torque imposed by a motor (115) to said steering assembly.
11. A control system (110) according to claim 6 or 7 wherein:
15 a sum of the values provided by said first controller (210) and said second controller (220)
is submitted to a motor controller (230) for controlling the assist torque imposed by a
motor (115) to said steering assembly.
12. A control system (110) according to any of the preceding claims wherein:
20 said steering assembly includes a shaft arrangement (121, 122, 130), by which a steering
wheel (120) is mechanically coupled to road wheels (127).
13. A steering system (100) for imposing an assist force to a steering assembly of a
vehicle, said steering system (100) comprising a control system (110) according to any of
25 the preceding claims.

Abstract

5 A steering system (100) and control system (110) for controlling an assist force imposed
to the steering assembly of a vehicle, so as to deliver a steering wheel resist torque that
can be felt by the vehicle driver and a method for the same, wherein the delivered steering
wheel resist torque is compared with a desired steering wheel resist torque, whereupon
the delivered steering wheel resist torque is adapted to be substantially the same as the
desired steering wheel resist torque through adapting the amount of said assist force.

10

Fig. 2

15

Fig 1

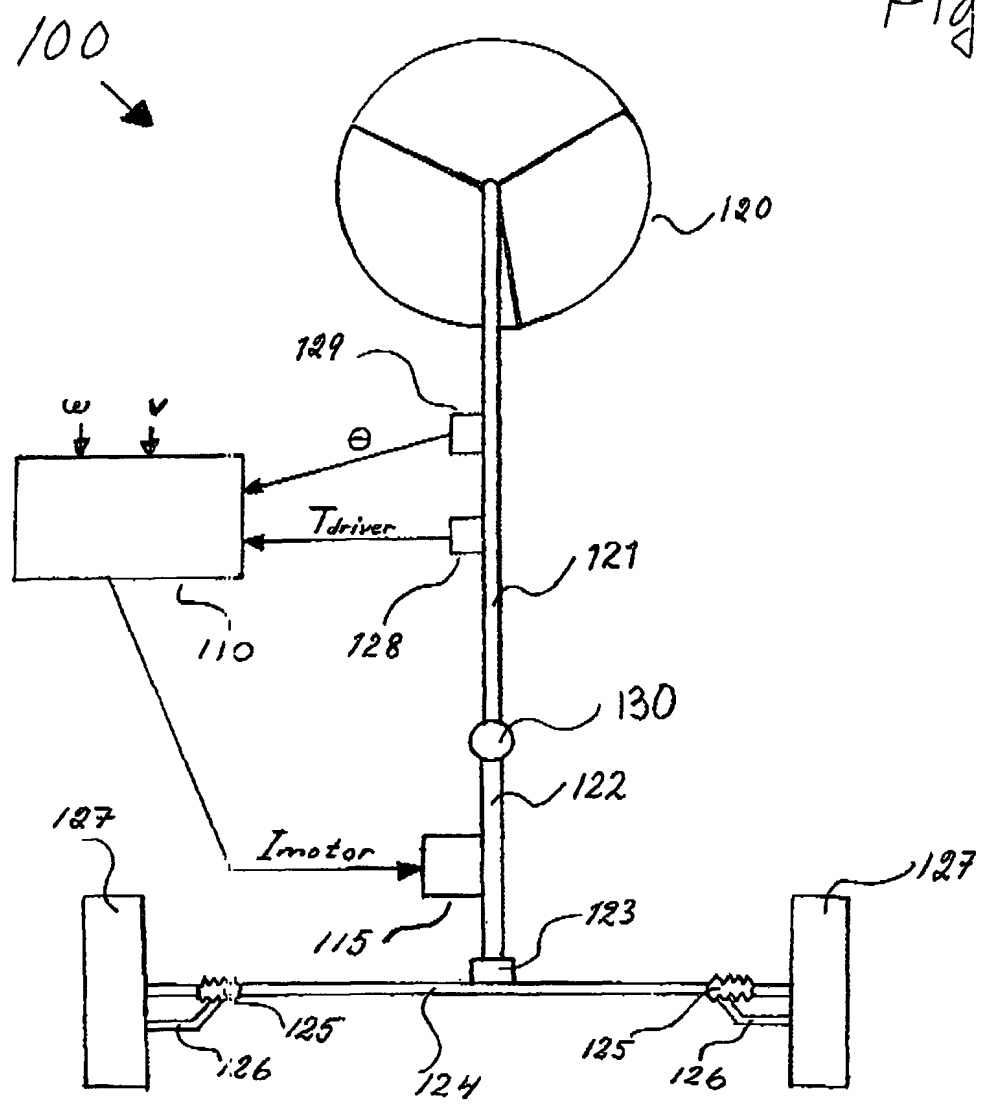


Fig 2

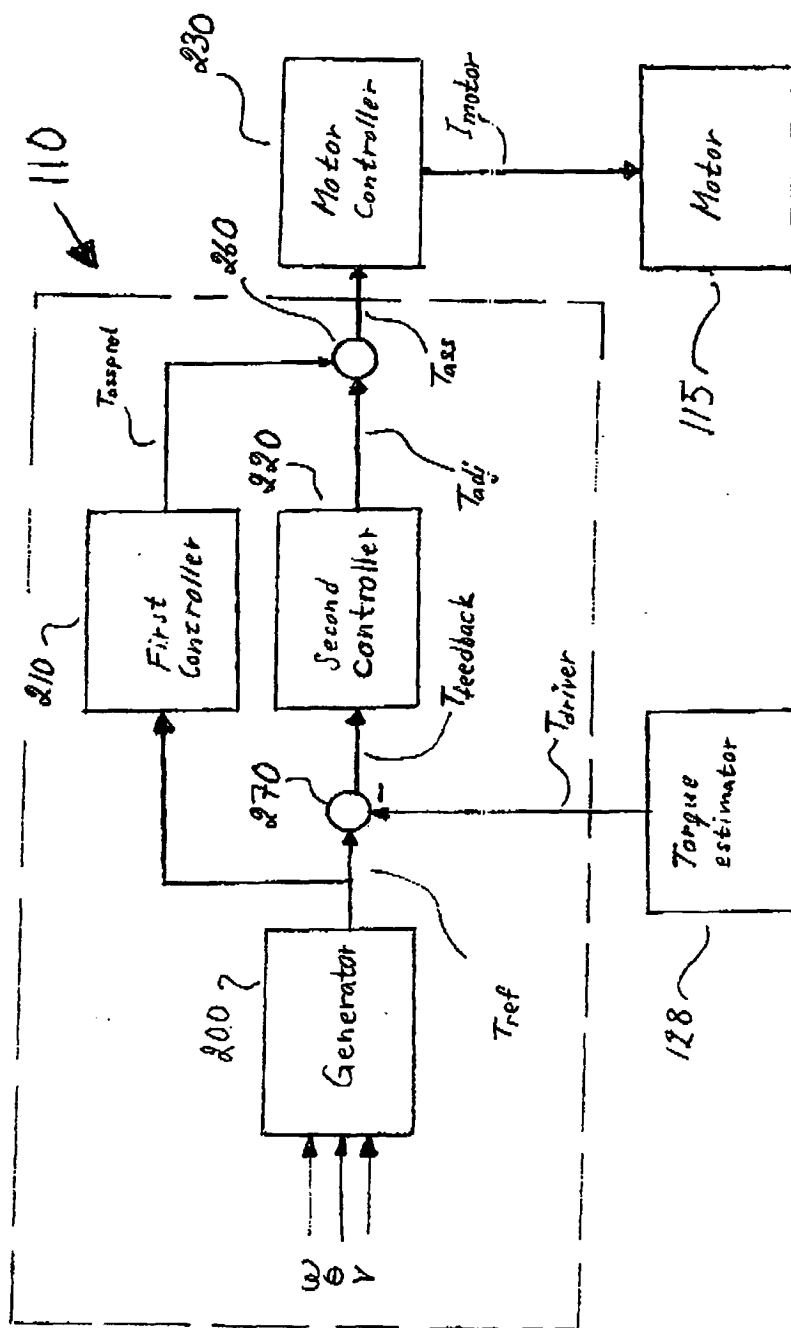


Fig 3

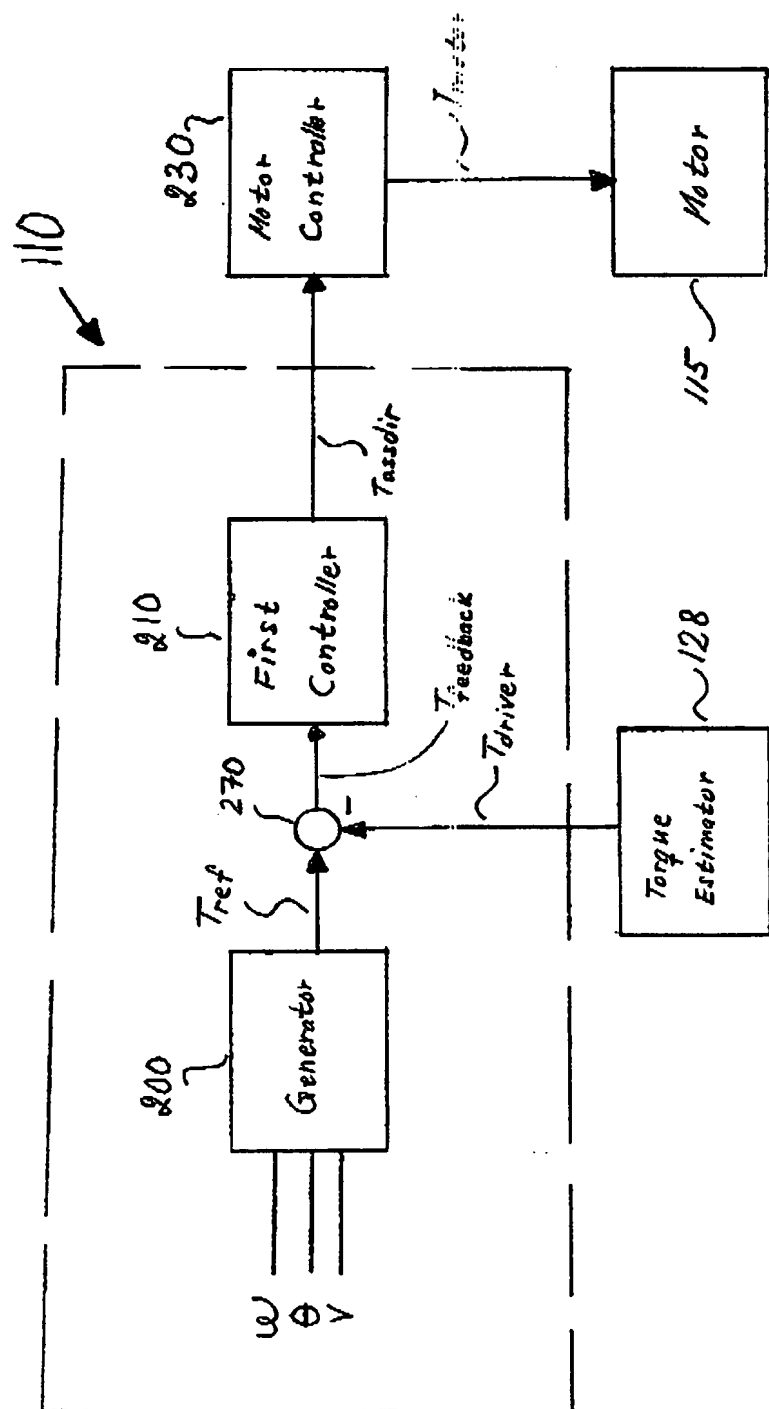


Fig 4

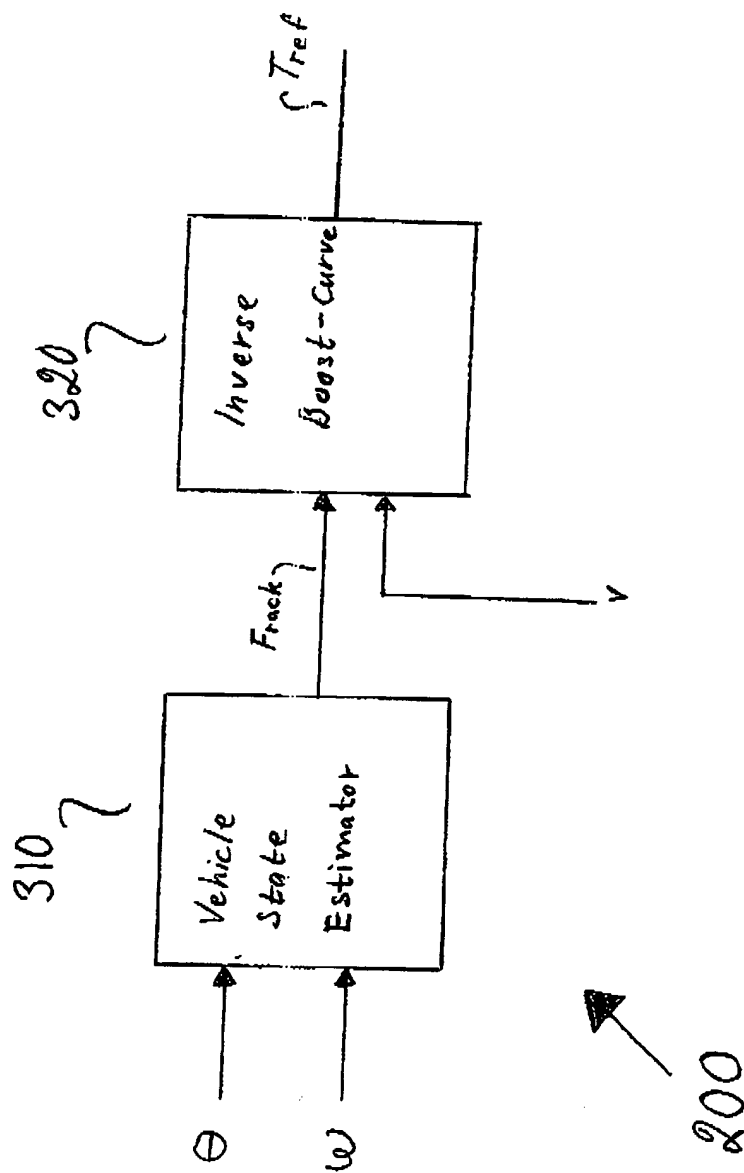


Fig 5

